

The following is an unsigned document a translation of an unsigned document circulating in France. It is entitled "Political Prisoners in West Germany (conditions of detention and addresses)".

HUNGERSTRIKE IN WEST GERMANY - DECEMBER '84

Last Dec. 4 political prisoners in West Germany started a hunger-strike. On Dec. 15, 28 political prisoners of the Red Army Faction (RAF), 4 prisoners of the anti-imperialist resistance, and 3 common law prisoners who became political in prison joined the hungerstrike.

The demands and political statements were made public by Christian Klar and Brigitte Mohnhaupt during a trial that is underway in Stammheim and by Gisela Dutzi, also within the context of a trial, in Frankfurt. But before returning to these statements and demands connected to the hungerstrike, it is necessary to recall the actual conditions of detention of the political prisoners of the RAF and the anti-imperialist resistance movement in West Germany.

Actually the prisoners of the RAF and the anti-imperialist resistance are dispersed throughout the entire prison system.

Following the hungerstrike in the '70s 3 partial regroupments were won:

- in Berlin, the partial regroupment of 4 RAF women: Monika Berberich, Angelika Goder, Regina Nicolai, Gabi Rollnick.
- in Celle, 4 RAF men: Andreas Vogel, Lutz Taufer, Knut Folkerts, Karl-Heinz Dellwo.
- in Lubeck, 4 RAF women: Hanna Krabbe, Inga Kreuzer, Christine Kuby, Irmgard Moller.

In these 3 prisons the German authoristies have completely isolated a wing of the building, totally transforming it into a super-prison within a prison. This concept is very similar to the French QHS* (translator: similar to the Canadian SHU) and this high-security model exists in every West German prison; more correctly qualified as "death wings". The prisoners held in these high-security quarters are exposed to particularly sophisticated conditions of detention, for example sensory deprivation, electronic surveillance, etc... (we will return later to the subject of detention conditions in high security units).

In other prisons where the comrades are completely isolated from each other, as well as from common law prisoners, the conditions of detention are more varied.

*Quartier Haute Securite-High Security Unit

23 of the prisoners are isolated in more "normal" conditions of detention in as far as they aren't exposed to sensory deprivation and the brain-washing programs put in place by the German authorities. But of these 23 prisoners (both RAF and anti-imperialist movement), 7 are denied yard time, Verena Becker and Sieglinde Hoffmann are in isolation together, but are denied yard time. 8 other prisoners are completely isolated in high security units with 24 hour a day electronic surveillance and sensory deprivation. To these must be added 3 Turkish prisoners of the Dev-Sol* movement, but we are ignorant of their exact conditions.

8 anti-imperialist prisoners are still imprisoned in foreign countries:

- Waltraud Liewald in Austria
- Christian Moller and Gabi Tiedmann in Switzerland
- Christel Frolich, Gabi Hartwig, Inge Kitzler, Brigitte Pagendamn, and Willi Piroch in Italy.

In the high security units, or "death wings", the prisoners are exposed to conditions of detention which are aimed at the physical, psychological, and, above all, political destruction, and are nothing more than a substitute for a death sentence, a sentence theoretically abolished in the West German penal code. Independent of and in spite of this the partial regroupment of the political prisoners in Berlin, Celle, and Lubeck appear to be positive gains because the comrades have won the right to group Yard time for one hour each day in groups of 2 or 3, even if the yard time is in a closed and grilled yard. As well they can be in contact for many hours each day in a common room. Nonetheless, they are always subjected to special conditions of sensory deprivation and constant electronic surveillance.

Other prisoners who have yard time are isolated even in the yard and spend 23 hours per day isolated in their cell according to detention conditions governed by §119.148 paragraph 2 of the penal code, better known as the 24 point program.

(The following 3 pages are a copy of the law.)

The administration offers other prisoners in total isolation the option of participating in "normal" detention: This signifies:
 -the prisoner is always in a cell, generally in a wing with plastic "security" furniture, triple grilled windows, a library limited to 20 items, and a radio receptor limited to medium and short wave.

-daily cell checks, random cell transfers, which establish a total control of the prisoner and her/his affairs.
 -yard time and some "leisure activities", such as televison viewing with other "normal" prisoners, either with a chosen group of prisoners or with a group of prisoners that changes often. IN ALL CASES the prisoner must undress and change clothing BEFORE and AFTER each walk or other common activity. With the exception of tobacco s/he doesn't have the right to take anything out of her/his cell.

*These prisoners occupied the Turkish Embassy in Koln and were sentenced to several years. At the same time their organization Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left) was outlawed in West-Germany.

- a RAF or anti-imperialist resistance movement prisoner has no contact with other political prisoners except in a courtroom during a trial in which s/he is accused with one or more other political prisoners.
- even if prisoners benefit from "normal" detention conditions it remains possible for the administration to suppress all political books and all political mail and visits at any time.
- in this form of detention contacts with other "normal" prisoners are recorded and precise psychological information about the ~~xxix~~ prisoner, her/his comportment and her/his moods are always gathered.
- obviously the goal of the authorities is to attempt to prevent the prisoner from engaging in politics so as to destroy her/his political identity in this way. This so-called "normal" detention is nothing other than a hidden continuation of isolation. The daily hour of yard-time and the 2 hours of television per week week with other prisoners (among ~~other~~ whom there can always be informers) don't diminish the continued isolation measure. THOSE THAT ACCEPT THIS—as political prisoners—DO NOTHING BUT SUPPORT THE STATE ~~XXXX~~ PROPAGANDA THAT ISOLATION DOESN'T EXIST.

THE PRISONERS OF THE RAF AND THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT DON'T, THEREFORE, PARTICIPATE IN "NORMAL" DETENTION AND REMAIN IN THEIR CELL IF THEY CAN'T WALK ALONE.

The penitentiary authorities react to this refusal in ~~part~~ by repression, they attempt to force the prisoners to participate. So there is no solitary yard time in Stammheim prison and certain RAF prisoners haven't left ~~xx~~ their cell for many months, even many years.

Other retaliatory methods include:

- denying prisoners the right to buy supplementary food or tobacco if s/he refuses prison work, as is the case with all political prisoners.
- put prisoners from neo-fascist groups in the same wings (as is the case in ~~x~~ Stammheim—even if there is no possibility of contact—the simple presence of neo-fascists in the wing reinforces the propaganda ~~xxx~~ which attempts to equivocate ~~g~~ fascism and communism). Recently the Stammheim administration went as far as trying to impose yard-time with a ~~xxxxxx~~ female neo-nazi militant in Stammheim ~~x~~ on Brigitte Mohnhaupt.
- another retaliatory method is to refuse the visit of a doctor ~~x~~ chosen by the prisoner.

There is ~~xx~~ the particularly grave case of Gunter Sonnenberg (in Bruchsal-Wuttemberg):

In May '77, during his arrest, he was very seriously injured in ~~x~~ the head. A new examination is necessary ~~for~~ and important, not only to avoid irreparable damage (which could cause the death of Gunter Sonneberg), damage that would result from the eventual fragmenting of the bullet, which could shift in the brain, but because the results from the examination would constitute the medical basis for the eventual decision to free him. The unanimous advice of all independent medical experts consulted is that Gunter Sonnenberg should have been freed a long time ago. The consecutive risks from his wounds not only can't be avoided in the isolation conditions to which he is subjected, but will certainly be aggravated.

All mail "undesirable" for the security of the State is banned. ~~excessively~~ This effects the mail between the prisoners and comrades on the outside as well as that between prisoners. The judges that censure decide above all, and this is frequent, that a prisoner can only receive and write a limited number of letters a week. Certain prison administrations also forbid sending photocopies, regardless of their content, because "secret" information could be transmitted.

Copies of left and East German newspapers are often totally banned: always with the same argument, that this or that ~~argument~~ article threatens the internal security ~~fixing~~ and order of the institution (even though the prisoner is isolated). The administration—especially during hungerstrikes—retains each issue which ~~amounts~~ amounts to the complete suppression of the subscription. Generally the reception of newspapers is regulated: 3 dailies, 2 to 3 ~~x~~ weeklies or monthlies.

Visitors are on principle considered by the authorities to be RAF sympathizers, messengers, etc. It is the BKA (translator: similar to the RCMP or the FBI) computer that ~~x~~ does or doesn't accord a visit. Those that are indexed by the computer as agitators during political trials receive practically no visits ever; the same for those against whom an order or trial is undertaken for RAF support, in effect it is always for support of prisoners during their hungerstrikes (in West Germany there are presently hundreds of ~~pxp~~ people in this situation); it is the same for those who demand ~~x~~ many authorizations to visit different prisoners. S/he is considered as a potential messenger from one prison to another. (on the other hand the state security relaxes their restrictions when they desire information which they can't get otherwise because they have never succeeded in infiltrating anti-imperialist groups).* With these types of arguments they systematically ~~desire~~ destroy all continuous contact of the prisoners by mail or by visits. The length of the visits is $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, the accused receive 2 hours per month in total, the condemned one hour, time that can be divided between many visitors. During a visit there is always a ~~screen~~ (separating the prisoner and visitor) with the exception of visits from parents. The visits are always surveilled by—at least—one officer of the political police and one prison guard; the conversation is literally noted, which frequently leads to falsifications and incorrect interpretations. Fragments of these notes are transmitted to ~~x~~ journalists of the State press and are later found in articles of a provocative psychological warfare nature. As well prisoner movement is observed and reported by the guards; we also find these citations and reports made public, as false and invented as can be.

The identity of anyone who ~~writes~~ writes to prisoners, visits them, or is present/during a trial is stored in the BKA computer and often in the file of the German border police as well.

The repression and the conditions of detention in ~~the~~ isolation which we have described here represent one aspect of the situation of political prisoners of the RAF and the anti-imperialist resistance movement in West Germany, the other aspect is the struggles waged by prisoners.

There have been several discoveries of infiltrators in recent years.

They have never stopped struggling and this hungerstrike, undertaken on Dec. 4, '84, is part of the fight against the systematic negation of their limited rights, for regroupement and the continuation of their anti-imperialist struggle.

Because they are submitted to white torture (translator: sensory deprivation) one of the principle objectives of the struggles waged by political prisoners to survive and conserve their political identity is to break this isolation by demanding regroupment. In their situation the hungerstrike is the weapon of their struggle.

For certain of them, for example Irmgard Moller and Monika Berbier (imprisoned since '72)—this hungerstrike, ~~which~~ undertaken on Dec. 4, is their 9th hungerstrike.

-in '74, after 5 months of hungerstriking Holger Meins died.
-in '81 Sigurd Debus died on a hungerstrike—in fact he died after force feeding imposed by the penitentiary administration and the German state is responsible for his death which must be ~~an~~ clearly and justifiably qualified as an "assassination". The assassination of Sigurd Debus on the hungerstrike in '81 brings to 9 the number of assassinations of political prisoners of the RAF ~~six~~ since '74 (translator: Sigurd Debus was not a member of the RAF, but an anti-imperialist who hungerstruck in solidarity with the RAF comrades).

-Holger Meins in '74

-Siegfried Hausner and Kathrina Hammerschmidt in '75

-Ulrike Meinhof in '76

-Gudrun Enslin, Andreas Baader, Jan Carl Raspe, and Ingrid Schubert in '77

-Sigurd Debus in '81.

In '81, following the hungerstrike the Solicitor-General of Germany promised that the RAF and the anti-imperialist resistance movement political prisoners would be regrouped. Today, not only has this promise not been kept, but on the contrary the repression has been increased in the prisons.

-isolation measures have been reinforced.

-visits are more often banned.

-mail is ~~an~~ seized and used to criminalize the correspondant as well as the families, the lawyers, and all exterior relations.

-banning books, etc..

In this situation the political prisoners have no other choice but to attempt to break the isolation in effect for the last 14 years by engaging in a new hungerstrike.

Here is an extract from one of the declarations:

"It is clear that ~~security~~ the security pretext put forward by the Solicitor-General against regroupment has only the function of hiding the real political problem confronting the Federal State in that the regroupment would signify an indirect recognition of the prisoners as political prisoners. The Federal State has no means of skirting this problem. The state organisms have been confronted with this problem for 14 years."

The concrete demands connected to conditions of detention which the political prisoners of the RAF and the anti-imperialist resistance movement, and the so-called common-law prisoners who ~~six~~ struggle against the inhumane prison conditions, face are summarized as follow:

(extract of the statement made available to the press during the trial of Gisela Dutzi on Dec. 6, '84):

"We demand detention according to the minimal guarantees of the Geneva Convention against the torture and destruction of prisoners of war."

The minimum guarantees cited in this ~~STATEMENT~~ are the following:

- 1) Regroupment (of RAF prisoners) with the prisoners of the anti-imperialist resistance and all prisoners in the struggle, in large groups
- 2) Abolition of individual and group isolation.
- 3) Abolition of surveillance and acoustic and optical control.
- 4) The suppression of impediments to ~~common~~ communication: visits, mail, books, free political discussion, free access to information.